

Digging canals for progress

It is a common experience that cultivation suffers both from excessive rainfall as well as a paucity of water. ABDUS SUBHAN writes on setting up a perennial supply of optimum water through a dependable irrigation system.

Their rapid digging programme initiated by the Government is destined to serve economic interests of the country. Intended to provide for a permanent irrigation system through feeder canals and subcanals, the programme envisages digging of new canals as also re-excavating of silted rivers and old canals.

The successful implementation of such an economic programme of far-reaching consequences will go a long way to improving the lot of the common man. There is intrinsic merit of the programme. Concocted efforts in this behalf can keep up the tempo.

It is a common experience that cultivation suffers tremendously either due to the excessive rainfall or the lack of timely sowing of seeds or the planting of the paddy plants are expeditious by the perennial supply of water either from natural or artificial sources. On the contrary drought conditions as the one experienced last year could play havoc with the crop-output and growth in an agricultural economy. Hence utilisation of water resources of the

country is imperative.

Because of the crop failure in extreme drought last year the extent of a famine was imminent. The extent of damage to the crops was so voluminous that the country had to double the agricultural growth. Food programmes had to be imported in order to meet the exigency of the situation.

Agriculture is the lifeblood of this nation and water is the main factor governing agricultural production. A permanent irrigation system is, therefore, the prime necessity for good cropping. Against this backdrop the launching of a programme for extending perennial flow of water is well-conceived solution that proper condition for cultivation could be created. And that way a permanent and suitably evolved irrigation facilities could offset the adverse effects of drought condition. Once perennial flow of water were ensured,

the nation could reap the benefit of good harvests.

The plan of digging one big feeder canal in each subdivision is challenging and is also essential. As envisaged, from feeder canals would be dug out in order to take water to various agricultural plots. Hundreds of thousands of tubewells and hundreds of pumps would also be sunk to augment water supply which is needed for intensified cultivation. Guarantee of perennial flow of water is going to ensure all-weather cropping regardless of drought.

The Government gives all hopes to the success of the canal-digging programme. Thousands of acres of land is going to benefit by this project. The canals stipulated by irrigable cultivable land on either side will be fed by rivers and rivulets meandering through the fields. Sub-feeder canals will simultaneously link up the plots with the main irrigation network in the interest of intensified cultivation. Three-crop pattern being the ultimate objective of the scheme. It is hoped that we would be able to double our agricultural production within the next five years.

For a poor country like Bangladesh meeting a recurring food deficit is not an easy task. Finding food for the multitude every year means a colossal drainage of hard-earned foreign exchange which could otherwise be utilised for productive purposes. Verily this country has got to exploit its potential for developing its economy in a consumer-manageable manner.

Productive nation-building projects as also industrialisation should in effect be the spheres where our attention should be focused. Last year a part of the government machinery was deemed to arrange foodgrains for those threatened by food shortages.

Such a state of affair is no happy a commentary on the condition of a developing country like Bangladesh. The problem of achieving self-sufficiency in food should be identified as the biggest national problem warranting undivided attention of the nation. The whole country should be made a party to this realisation. Because there must be nation-wide participation in the whole exercise of building the national economy on a sound footing.

National development, particularly production of food, should be the primary concern of all policy planners and executives.

Experts, at home and abroad, are fully convinced of the nation's viability in the agricultural sector. Two-fold rise in food production would be feasible once the availability of water round the year was ensured and all tapetous to the three-crop pattern. Steps to supply other inputs such as fertilisers and pesticides are moves in right direction. It is reassuring that at the leadership to the canal digging expedition is being given from the highest level.

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